



# Idaho Naturalist news

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The Idaho Naturalist News is a quarterly newsletter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program.

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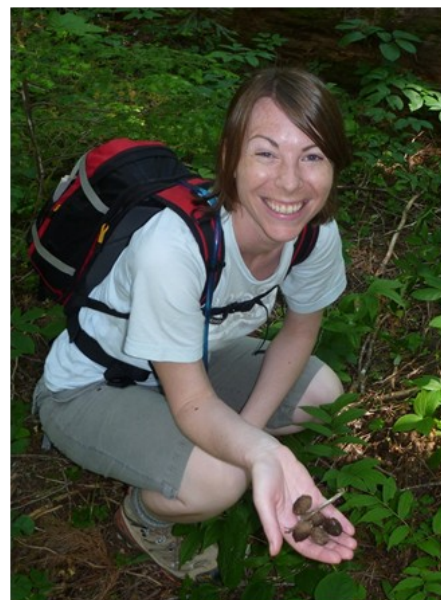
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## Welcome, Pend Oreille Chapter!

*Connie Burkhart, Pend Oreille Master Naturalist*



ABOVE: Pend Oreille Master Naturalists. Photo by Joyce Pence. RIGHT: Hiker Sara Vinduska finds moose scat. Photo by Matt Frazier.



The Idaho Master Naturalists, Pend Oreille Chapter, and the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness co-sponsored a Tracking Hike on Sunday, July 17, led by Brian Baxter. Brian, who teaches at Glacier Institute, earned his B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Western Carolina University. He is a wildlife researcher and project coordinator for Silver Cloud Associates, a natural resource information company based in Libby, MT. He has been involved in forest carnivore research in North America for the past fifteen years and is a member of the Western Forest Carnivore Committee.

Nine hikers joined Brian. The mud in the riparian area around Blue Creek, Montana captured the tracks of elk, moose, deer, bear, and bobcat. Other animal tracking signs observed included scatology, bedding behavior, trail marking, and browsing. Signs of scavenging on trees by birds and bears were also noted. Finding fresh bear scat added interest as the group proceeded down the trail.

Lunch in a cedar grove along the creek concluded with a talk on old growth ecology. The two groups also sponsored hikes with naturalist and author Jack Nisbet in August (see photo on last page.).

# Wildlife Express

IDFG Staff

School has started all across the state and many of you have already sent your children or grandchildren off for a new school year. If you are a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or special friend to a child in the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades, why not make their class a little *wild* this year with a subscription to *Wildlife Express*. For only \$35 you can provide a classroom set of *Wildlife Express* for each month of the school year. In addition, your child's teacher will receive a copy of the *Educator's Express* full of activities and additional information. This year's slate of topics are sure to interest your child and include mule deer, woodpeckers, parasites, red fox, Idaho ecosystems, and more. The May issue will be devoted to fishing just in time for next summer vacation.

You can find the subscription form on the IDFG website under Education. Thanks for helping Idaho's students learn about wildlife!

<http://idfg.idaho.gov/public/media/wildlifeExpress/>



# Give Wildlife a Break

*Henry's Fork Chapter*

Frustrated by the number of large mammals and other wildlife killed on highways by collisions? Island Park is in a critical wildlife corridor. Wildlife cross Hwy 20 and Hwy 87 to reach water, food and shelter, frequently traveling at dawn, dusk, and night. Idaho Transportation Department warning signs are in places where animals cross most often, but they can cross almost anywhere. Help make our highways safer for wildlife. Tips for drivers to avoid an animal collision:

- Observe speed limits; lower your speed at night.
- Know where animal crossing signs are posted.
- Look for animals near the road; if you see one animal attempting to cross, look for others there are usually more waiting to cross.
- Be cautious when you approach an area where trees, shrubs, and water sources are adjacent to the road because animals use these areas for cover and they contain food sources.
- Use extra caution during spring and fall migration times when large numbers of animals are moving through our area.
- Never honk your horn at a moose—moose run toward the sound.
- Install "Deer Alert" whistles on your vehicle; they work for all animals and are available at auto stores.

For more info, visit [www.sav-a-life.com/Sal\\_faqs.htm](http://www.sav-a-life.com/Sal_faqs.htm)



*Island Park is not the only place where wildlife/car collisions have people concerned. Drivers are warned to slow down for bighorn sheep near Challis Idaho. Photo by Dick Nachbar.*



# What Do You Call a Group of Vultures?

*Ron Lopez, Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist*

I thought you folks may be interested in this photo taken by my daughter Sara on Friday, September 30. I have volunteered to do a bird study in the Hammer Flats area. We have eight stations at Hammer Flats in the study. I stay ten minutes at each station keeping track of each species of birds encountered there. Yesterday we saw a bunch of vultures. At the Master Naturalist Potluck last night I was describing what we had seen and one of my fellow Master Naturalists at the table said we saw a "kettle" of vultures. We counted twenty-eight birds soaring on the rising thermals. According to my source, they were getting ready migrate to their winter grounds. I know a little about birds but had not heard of this phenomenon. I thought you may find it interesting. This fall I will continue my work at Hammer Flats and will be involved counting Mule Deer, Elk and Antelope.



*A kettle of vultures. Photo courtesy, Ron's daughter, Sara Aycock.*

# Master Naturalists Fill Summer with Conservation Projects

*Bren Dismuke, Henry's Fork Master Naturalist*

The Henry's Fork Chapter (HFC) of the Idaho Master Naturalists (IMN) summer season is slowing down, and lovely images of people working together for a common good flash back to me. For this organization that means conservation of Island Park's bountiful beauty of landscape and wildlife. The Yellowstone ecosystem, of which we are a part, belongs to all of us. And, it's the responsibility of all folks here to assist in its ability to remain healthy and vibrant. This has been an exciting year. We ran a shortened program to allow students working hard toward their certification to catch up and complete their work.

There are too many projects to name them all, but here are a few: mule deer trapping, assisting with fish spawning at the Henry's Lake egg taking facility, fencing to help protect riparian areas, collecting data on ungulate movement across Hwy 20, creel surveys, data collection at the Buffalo River fish ladder, and building a native plants garden at Harriman State Park. There was something for everyone's skill and ability level.

We are already planning next year's program with many exciting new opportunities for education and volunteering. The HFC of the IMN are dedicated to bringing the students fascinating information about life in this ecosystem and how all of it works together. Classes will begin sometime next spring, and run weekly to the end of August.



**ABOVE:** Large Carnivore Specialist, Brian Aber trains the Henry's Fork Master Naturalists in tracking. **RIGHT:** Nancy Willard, Leslie Meintjes, and Beth Fleming work on educating Island Park residents about living with bears. Photos by Bren Dismuke.

If you are interested in more information and possibly signing up for next year's program, please call Mary Van Fleet at 558- 9127.



# Jefferson Burn Impact Studies

*Richard Wisner, Upper Snake Master Naturalist*

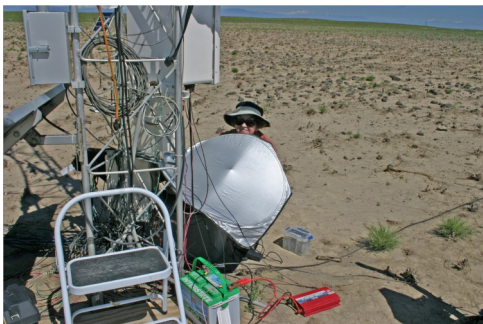
Around 2pm on Tuesday afternoon, July 13, 2010, a fire started near Jefferson Blvd. in the Idaho National Laboratory. For two days it was pushed by winds with gusts up to fifty-five miles per hour. By Thursday evening, when contained, it had burned 109,000 acres of INL, BLM, state and private land. It was the biggest fire the INL had ever suffered. And, at that time, the largest fire in the nation.

The land of the burn area, often characterized largely as sagebrush-steppe, although recovering, is still now mostly barren. It could be characterized now as a playa. It is swept by wind and rain and baked by the sun. Alternately, it is snow covered, or saturated clay and sand, or mud cracks and drifting sands—the direction of the plumes of sand indicating the direction of the winds. The fire-initiated transformations of the land are the subject of Dr. Matt Germino's long-term study, entailing literally thousands upon thousands of measurements and observations.

These observations include characterization of the wind-driven erosion of sand and clay soil, as directly measured by height between plant stem-root junction and supporting soil (degree of pedestalization), inter-coppice (plant to plant) erosion depths, along with moisture content of the near surface of the soil, rain fall amounts, wind speeds and directions at various elevations above ground, and the soil and sand re-deposition also at various locations and elevations. Along with the humidity sensors, rain and moisture gauges, and anemometers whose various data is up-linked and logged to computer, there are wildlife cameras to record animal activity as well as to assess local conditions on the ground over time.

Dr. Germino's studies indicate that about six inches of soil have been eroded from the site in less than one year. This type of erosion has followed nearly every fire that was greater than 10,000 acres on the INL since 1994. Fires like this have occurred nearly every year in the last fifteen or so years.

The Idaho Master Naturalist Program has assisted Dr. Germino and his technical assistant, Lala Chambers (IMN class of '10), in servicing the study area. This includes the instrumentation, gathering samples, taking measurements, and recording data. The pictures below are of the area taken May 22 and June 23.



*LEFT: Master Naturalist Lala Chambers servicing data loggers.*

*RIGHT: Lala Chambers taking Inter-coppice measurements.*

*Photos by Richard Wisner.*





# Brochure Enhances Botanical Garden Experience

*Elizabeth Dickey, Idaho Botanical Garden's Education Coordinator and the Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist Advisor*

Sagebrush-steppe member Janice Berndt created a beautiful garden sculpture brochure for the Idaho Botanical Garden, published in June in time for the grand unveiling of three large metal pieces of art. Janice took photographs of the nineteen sculptures, researched their histories, and wrote short descriptions of each and then assembled everything into an attractive, professional-grade brochure. The Garden had very little information about some of the pieces and sorely needed more complete documentation. Prior to the creation of the brochure, visitors interested in the art could learn little about the sculptures and their creators. Thank you, Janice!

[http://www.idahobotanicalgarden.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category\\_id=120](http://www.idahobotanicalgarden.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_id=120)



*LEFT: Camas Lily/Sacajawea by rusty Talbot, bronze, 2006. Photo by Janice Berndt.*

*BELOW: Unity Fountain by Delila DeLapp, enamel fused to copper, 2006. Photo by Janice Berndt.*



# Turning Over New Leaves

Looking closely at leaves is a great way to appreciate some grand living things on an intimate scale. Backyard trees are like old friends—dependable, familiar—but out on a trail, there are new friends to meet. Taking family members on a hike as summer ends and autumn begins is a real treat. The warm days and cool nights bring the colors to the season. As you venture through our Gem State environments, you'll encounter an astonishing variety of trees. So grab your day pack, a tree ID book or two, a healthy snack, a water bottle, and plan an hour exploring the trees of Idaho.

There's an old expression about not being able to see the forest for the trees. Usually, we use it to describe folks who are so concerned with the details that they end up missing the big picture. But with trees themselves, the big picture is pretty hard to miss—they are, after all, the tallest living things on the planet. And the details are not only fascinating, they are precisely what give each tree its unique character and beauty: bark, buds, flowers, fruit—and, most importantly, leaves. No matter how big or small, every tree depends on leaves. These seemingly delicate structures perform a most remarkable feat—soaking up sunlight and turning it into energy that sustains not just the tree but ultimately all of us.

In the fall the dominant tree issue is the turning and falling of leaves. Make note of when your neighborhood trees' leaves first begin to turn. What color are they? When does the last leaf drop? Some trees drop theirs early, while others such as oak cling to their leaves well into winter. Look, too, for trees dropping their fruit—cones from Ponderosa pine trees, acorns from oaks and others dispersing their seeds and seed pods.

**TAKING NOTES**—Since most of the changes a tree goes through will unfold slowly over time, notes or journals are helpful for tracking the stages of the autumn season. Armed with a writing utensil, sketch book, notepad or camera, your hike will surely result in a wonder sequence of change.

Continues on next page



LEAF WALKS—Leaves really grab our attention twice a year—in the springtime, when they come out and in the fall, when they turn dazzling colors before falling to the ground. When you are on the trail with your family, look around. Can you find a leaf as big as your hand? As you walk along, pick up a leaf from the ground. Can you match it to the tree it belongs to? There are many ways to explore the variety of leaves in your part of the Gem State. Here are several to get you started. Look for interesting shapes (ovals, hearts, stars, eggs, mittens, etc.); textures (smooth, rough, waxy, fuzzy, papery); smells (sweet, sour, pungent, stinky, etc.) and colors (red, orange, yellow, green, scarlet, purple, and brown). Consider making leaf rubbings in your journal, pressing a leaf or making leaf prints. Several on-line references or books from your library or school can help with this.

So hike a trail and turn over some new and old leaves once a week with friends in your neighborhood, city or region of Idaho. We've a lot of leaves to learn...it can take a lifetime of hikes...and you still will be learning.

*(Adapted from The Green Hour- A Daily Dose of nNature for Happier, Healthier, Smarter Kids, Chapters 7&9)*

## Reference

Christopher, Todd (2010) *The Green Hour- A Daily Dose of Nature for Happier, Healthier, and Smarter Kids*. Trumpeter Books, Boston, Massachusetts; [www.shambhala.com](http://www.shambhala.com) ISBN:978-1-59030-756-4

Idaho Big Tree Program: [http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/trees/id\\_white\\_pine.htm](http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/trees/id_white_pine.htm)

Idaho State Tree: [http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/trees/id\\_white\\_pine.htm](http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/trees/id_white_pine.htm)

Leaf Identification: [http://www.chow.com/facts\\_7879043\\_oklahoma-extension-leaf-identification.html](http://www.chow.com/facts_7879043_oklahoma-extension-leaf-identification.html)

Leaf Rubbing: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/hort/youth/leafrub.shtml>

Summer Leaf Rubbing: [http://ohioline.osu.edu/bb-fact/pdf/BB\\_K\\_9\\_R10.pdf](http://ohioline.osu.edu/bb-fact/pdf/BB_K_9_R10.pdf)

Trees of Idaho Forests: <http://www.idahoforests.org/trees1.htm>

What Tree is that: <http://www.arborday.org/trees/whattree/>

*Dr. Kevin Laughlin lives in Garden City, Idaho. He is an Idaho Master Naturalist and retired University of Idaho Extension Educator. Much of his career has been focused teaching, organizing and facilitating horticulture, gardening & especially children's gardening programs.*

# Knocking out Noxious Weeds

*Marcus Nicols, Chapter Advisor for the Treasure Valley Community College Chapter*

The Treasure Valley Community College Master Naturalists and Natural Resource students organized a weed pull and spray day on a two acre section of our campus here in Ontario in early October. It was very successful! Volunteers filled a large dumpster with goat heads, thistles, and koskia! Volunteers also borrowed an ATV from the county and sprayed the soil to prevent re-growth next year.



*ABOVE: Meredith Fisher, Andrea Bonadiman, and Zack King stand with their pile of noxious weeds. RIGHT: Shawn McKay gets ready to spray the ground for weeds.*





# Parting Shots



Rocks in a cold fog  
Immovable sentinels  
From the molten depths

ABOVE: Lichen on arches  
at The Little City of Rocks.  
Photos and poem by Bob  
Ellis.

RIGHT: Pend Oreille  
Master Naturalists  
enjoy the scenery on a hike  
in the proposed Scotch-  
man's Peak Wilderness

